

## **Commencement Dinner Speech**

**By Professor Tan Eng Chye  
NUS President**

**20 July 2018**

Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education

Our 2018 Honorary Graduate, The Honourable Justice  
Dr Chao Hick Tin

NUS Pro-Chancellors

NUS Chairman and Trustees

Distinguished Guests

Graduates, Students, Alumni, Staff

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Good evening, and welcome to this evening's Dinner, which marks the end of this year's NUS Commencement Ceremonies. Witnessing the many moments of joy and celebration among graduates, families and friends, I am reminded once again, of the great impact and value our University can create, as well as the strong bonds of trust and support between the wider community and NUS.
2. I would like to express my appreciation to the faculty, staff and students who have worked so tirelessly and selflessly to make each Commencement Ceremony memorable and successful.
3. At the NUS of today, students have greater opportunities than ever before to pursue interests and passions, and to realise their professional and personal goals and aspirations through a broad range of diverse programmes and experiences.

4. Our learning innovations, which stress an experiential component, small-group interactions, and multidisciplinary thinking, have enabled our graduates to thrive in the diverse and complex work environments operating today. Many of our graduates have created great impact in diverse fields, and contributed in many ways, to the development and progress of the nation.
5. This year, we have some outstanding graduates who represent NUS' best traditions of excellence and spirit of service. Mr Steven Tanus, who performed for us earlier, is the first visually-impaired student to graduate with a Bachelor of Music (Honours) Degree in Piano from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music. Despite his visual handicap, Steven pursued his passion, drawing on the support of his parents (who are here with us this evening), his mentors and peers. His ambition is not to let his disability define him; instead, he wants to be recognised as "a good pianist who happens to be blind".
6. Mr Nicholas Ooi Hsien Loong, who was fascinated with computers from a young age, steadily charted his path to NUS through ITE and Ngee Ann Polytechnic. Nicholas, who was awarded the Lee Kuan Yew - Scholarship to Encourage Upgrading Award - offered to outstanding ITE graduates - is an intrepid entrepreneur and an NUS Overseas Colleges alumnus who started his first IT-related company at 18. He co-founded the social enterprise, *bantu*, which means 'help' in Malay, to provide technology solutions for the underserved social sector.
7. We are greatly pleased to have been able to play a role in helping individuals such as Steven and Nicholas, and many others, reach for new frontiers of growth and accomplishment. Later this evening, you will hear from two representatives from the Class of 2018, Miss Sharifa Fadillah Binte Yaa'cop, who graduated with a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours), and Mr Jeffrey Lee, the President of the 39<sup>th</sup> EXCO of the NUS Students' Union, who graduated with a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Economics) and a Bachelor of Science (Applied Mathematics).

8. Our graduates are going out into a world that is changing rapidly. With these seismic shifts, new domain skills and abilities such as problem-solving, intellectual flexibility, and social and emotional intelligence will be needed.
9. In Singapore, the national movement, SkillsFuture, aims to maximise the potential of our citizens through lifelong training and re-skilling, so that every individual will be able to access and explore diverse learning pathways, contribute positively to the community, and live fulfilling lives.
10. NUS shares this holistic vision of SkillsFuture, and we have announced that lifelong learning will become a centrepiece of NUS' programmes and approaches going forward.
11. We have already taken bold steps: in 2016, we established the School of Continuing and Lifelong Education to spearhead innovation, integration and coordination efforts throughout the University in the domain of Continuing Education and Training (CET); more recently, we launched our Lifelong Learners Programme (NUS L<sup>3</sup>), which contains the paradigm-shifting notion of a 20-year automatic enrolment period for students.
12. The numbers involved reflect the scale of our endeavour: we have close to 300,000 alumni who are eligible under NUS L<sup>3</sup>; we aim to roll out 500 courses in August this year, and build rapidly; by 2020, we aim to offer about 20,000 CET places annually.
13. We believe that lifelong learning goes beyond offering more training places, and that it can form the basis for far-reaching innovation in the design, delivery and experience of learning and education.
14. The extensive life and industry experiences of our CET learners can be curated into our learning approaches. Blended classes of undergraduates and mature adult learners can offer new, exciting sharing and interaction opportunities. Through collaborative CET programmes, we can gain deeper insights into current and emerging industry trends and practises.

15. This deep push into lifelong learning innovation will impact and transform the University at every level: from curriculum planning, to technology enablement, career advisory, and credential awarding, just to name a few areas. Our future-proofing efforts will embrace a more diverse spectrum, from undergraduates to mature adults. This marks a fundamental, long-term, mindset shift.
16. Our end objective is to deliver new and compelling value to students, alumni and the public, so that they will become empowered, confident of their skills and abilities to adapt, and able to contribute fully, at every stage of their lives.
17. With the support of the wider community, the Government, our alumni, and the determined spirit of the NUS community, we believe that NUS is well poised to emerge as a leader and innovator in this significant sector.
18. To the Class of 2018, I am fully confident that your impact and contributions in the years ahead will make Singapore and the world a better place.
19. As our newest alumni, I hope you will soon make the first of many happy connections with NUS, as active alumni, and as committed lifelong learners. I wish each of you success, happiness, and fulfilment. Seek to serve your community and country, and to help others live fulfilling lives.
20. A toast to the Class of 2018!